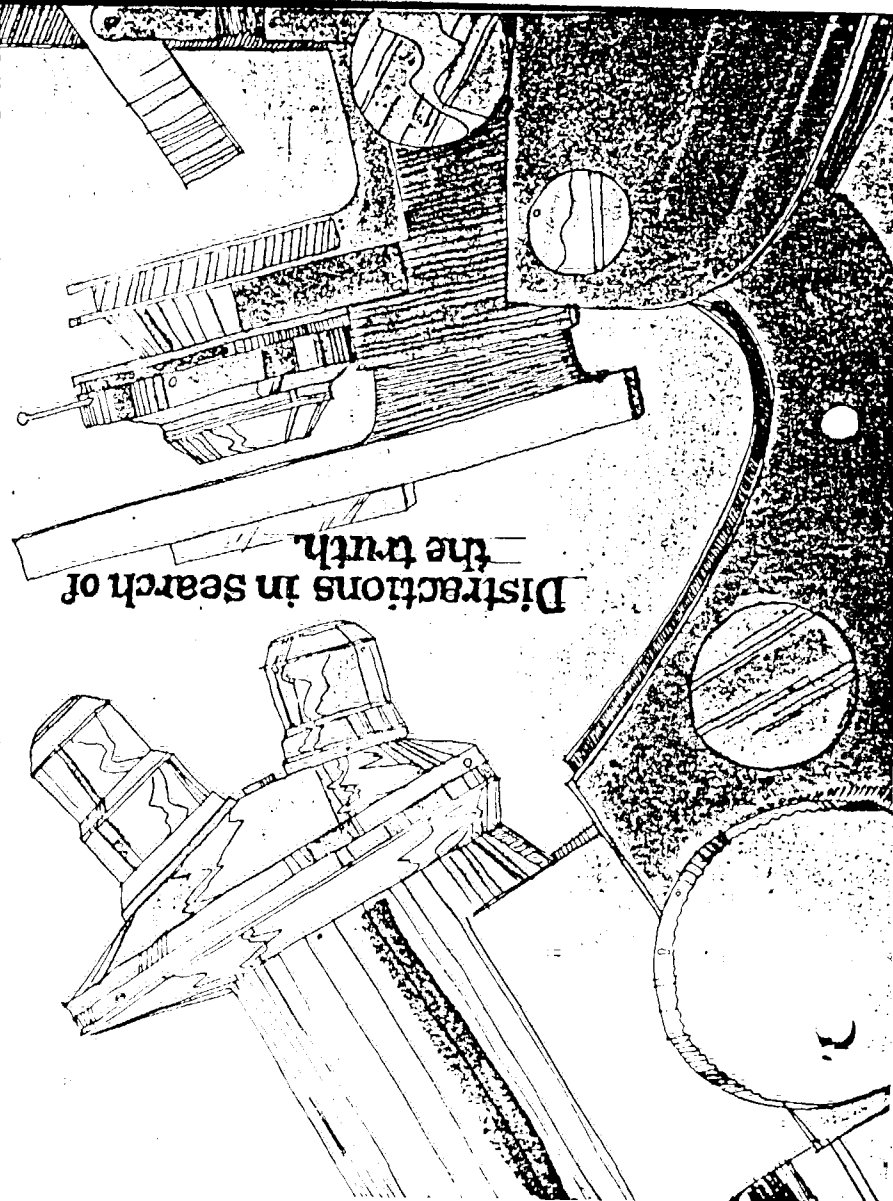


**The microbes**  
 are trying to  
 get us.

There's always  
 the chairman of  
 the committee.

**Distractions in search of  
 the truth.**



## Distractions in the search for truth

Are we on the brink of paranoia?

Dr. Lewis Thomas, president of the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, recalls that not many years ago, when a patient visited a doctor, it was for an ailment or an injury that was readily discernible. Now, it is estimated, as many as 75% of all visits to doctors are by people who have nothing organically wrong with them.

Dreaded killers and cripplers like tuberculosis, pneumonia and polio have been brought under control. People live longer than ever. Yet perhaps as a result of mass communications and widely publicized "wars" against disease, many have dark perceptions of the world as a place where, in Dr. Thomas's words, "the microbes are always trying to get at us, to tear us cell from cell, and we only stay alive and whole through diligence and fear."

Another famous doctor wonders whether we are having an epidemic of cancer or of cancerphobia. "The present climate," he says, "seems to be a particularly alarmist one, perhaps bordering on hysteria."

And where there is unreasoning fear and hysteria, history teaches us, there is certain to be a scapegoat. Today that scapegoat is the smoker.

It didn't start out that way. First, there was a "war on cancer." Then a "war on cigarettes." Now there is a "war on smokers."

The creation of a scapegoat serves a purpose for those who create it.

It distracts people from their real problems. "Look," one can say, "he's the cause of all your troubles."

But at a terrible cost.

At the cost of suppressing facts, of distorting data, of refusing

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to look at where a real, but contradictory, truth might be hidden.

At the cost, ultimately, of slowing down the progress of science, and of dividing society into hostile camps.

And that cost is being paid today by everyone.

There is no way that any scientist can say that smoking -- or any one of hundreds of other things -- does not cause cancer. There is no way to prove any substance absolutely innocent until you have found the real cause.

But there is one thing that science can say with assurance: No one knows the root cause or causes of cancer.

That is the fact which the anti-smoking forces would divert us from.

And in doing so, they divert us from a search for the truth to a hunt for the scapegoat.

Today, our incipient paranoia about cancer, heart disease and other ailments is fed not only by charges against smoking but by charges against milk, coffee, bread, sugar, margarine, olive oil and peanut butter -- to select just a few at random.

For what comfort it may be to all of us exposed to these substances and the charges against them, Dr. Thomas has an interesting speculation:

"We don't really know anything at a deep level about the mechanism of heart disease, or cancer, or stroke, or rheumatoid arthritis. We can make up stories about them, and it could be, I suppose, that they do have multiple causes, and are due to things we can't control in the environment.

"If that's true ... it would be quite a bit of news. Because it has never happened before. Every disease we know about ... turns out to be a disease in which there is one central mechanism. **1005047794**

"There may be a lot of other things going on, and maybe a lot of things that we don't know about have to do with a predisposition to the

disease, and maybe a lot of things aggravate the disease once it is established, but there is always a chairman of the committee.

"In the case of pneumonia, it is the pneumococcus, and in the case of tuberculosis it is the tubercle bacillus, and in pellagra it's a single vitamin deficiency. And I have a hunch -- of course, I can't prove it -- that it will turn out to be that way for cancer and probably for coronary occlusion, probably for stroke and probably for the kind of kidney disease that develops into chronic renal failure."

As Dr. Thomas suggests, today's scientists suspect a wide range of factors that may be involved in these diseases. Among them are genetic predisposition, aging, stress, obesity, high blood pressure, cholesterol, radiation, chemicals and the growing number of occupational and environmental pollutants.

And we must all of us somehow adjust to this world in which so many things can be suspected, but where none appears to be the "chairman of the committee."

It clearly can not be smoking where the one who contracts the disease does not smoke. And it clearly cannot be any of the others where they are not present.

So the search must go on.

And the only thing that can slow it down is for all of us to allow the voice of paranoia to divert our attention and our funds from the search for truth to the hunt for the scapegoat.

We have confidence that there are enough of us, nonsmokers as well as smokers, who want to know the truth to see that that doesn't happen.

The Tobacco Institute

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Freedom of choice is the best choice.